THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No, Sir. India's exports to USA and European Countries have registered a positive growth during the last two years.

(d) US's GSP scheme is due to expire on December 31, 2006 the office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) had issued a Federal Register Notice on 8th August, 2006 inviting written comments for Administrative Review of GSP Scheme. The Government has taken up this matter with the office of USTR including in the form of submitting written comments to USTR. No decision on this however has been taken by US as on date.

**Establishment of Areca Board**

19. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the arecanut growers of Karnataka have been demanding establishment of an Areca Board;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of Government in this regard; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to protect the interests of Areca growers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development at Calicut under the administrative control of the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation is looking after the production aspects including monitoring of development programme on arecanut crop under National Horticulture Mission. No demand for establishment of an Areca Board has so far been placed before the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation.

(d) To protect the interest of Areca growers, the import duty on arecanut has been raised from 35% to 100% to restrict imports. The Finance Ministry has also issued instructions to Custom officials to prevent illegal entry of arecanut into the country.